

Thank you, Chairman Rush, for holding today’s hearing and for introducing this important bill. I am glad to be a cosponsor of the Bereaved Consumers’ Bill of Rights Act.

I want to welcome our witnesses, including our two Illinois witnesses: the Honorable Patrice Brown Holmes, Chair of the Illinois Cemetery Oversight Task Force, and Randall Earl of the National Funeral Directors Association, who is a funeral director from Decatur, Illinois.

Last year, a cemetery in my state of Illinois – Burr Oaks – made national headlines after some of its employees horribly violated the dignity of individuals interred at the cemetery in the name of nothing more than greed.

Last July, this committee held a field hearing in Chicago where we heard the heartbreaking testimony from families, including some of my constituents, who no longer knew where to go to mourn their loved ones. One of my constituents, Mrs. Rose Heard, went to the cemetery to order headstones for her son, daughter, and mother. While at the cemetery a worker looked at the map and said, “Someone is buried on top of the others in that grave.”

Imagine having to hear that. The bill before us would require the FTC to issue rules that would protect the rights of consumers when they are facing one of the most difficult times in life – burying a loved one or preparing for their own funerals.

Again, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for holding this hearing. I hope it is the first step towards passing this important bill.

I yield back the balance of my time.